1: Leitner L-3 (1866-93) 1893? AV3 Dard AV3

LEGENDS, SONGS, AND CUSTOMS OF DARDISTAN,*

(Gilgit, Yasin, Hunza, Nagyr, Chitrál, &c., and Kafiristan).

197 I. Dardu Legends, *in Shiná* (the language, with dialectic modifications, of Gilgit, Astor, Guraiz, Chilás, Hódur, Dareyl, Tangir, etc., and the language of historical songs in Hunza and Nagyr).

(*Committed to writing for the first time in* 1866,
By Dr. G. W. Leitner,
212 *from the dictation of Dards. This race has no written character of its own.*)

A.—Demons = Yatsh[1] (Yuecci ?).

776 Demons are of a gigantic size, and have only *one eye, which is on the forehead.* They used to rule over the [177] mountains and oppose the cultivation of the soil by man. They often dragged people away into their recesses. Since the adoption of the Muhammadan religion, the demons have relinquished their possessions, and only occasionally trouble the believers.

776 They do not walk by day, but confine themselves to 823 promenading at night. A spot is shown near Astor, at a village called Bulent, where five large mounds are pointed out which have somewhat the shape of huge baskets. Their existence is explained as follows. A Zemindar (cultivator) at Grukōt, a village farther on, on the Kashmir road, had, with great trouble, sifted his grain for storing, and had put it into baskets and sacks. He then went away. The demons came—five in number—carrying huge leather-

101 * "Dardistan," or the country of the Daradas of Hindu mythology, embraces, in the narrowest sense of the term, the Shiná-speaking countries (Gilgit, &c.); in a wider sense, Hunza, Nagyr, Yasin, and Chitrál; and in the widest, also parts of Kafiristan. (See my "Dardistan," part III.)

[1] "Yatsh" means "bad" in Kashmiri.

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765 meat. After that period the grave is again visited by the deceased's friends, who, on reaching the grave, eat some ghí and bread, offer up prayers, and, on returning, slaughter a sheep, whose kidney is roasted and divided in small bits amongst those present. Bread is distributed amongst those present and a little feast is indulged in, in memory of the 771 deceased. I doubt, however, whether the Gilgitis are [761] very exact in their religious exercises. The mention of death was always received with shouts of laughter by them, and one of them told me that a dead person deserved only to be kicked. He possibly only joked and there can be little doubt that the Gilgit people are not very communicative about their better feelings. It would be ridiculous, however, to deny them the possession of natural feelings, although I certainly believe that they are not over-burdened [177] with sentiment. In Astór the influence of Kashmir has made the people attend a little more to the ceremonies of the Mussulman religion.

In Chilâs rigour is observed in the maintenance of religious practices, but elsewhere there exists the greatest 212 laxity. In fact, so rude are the people that they have no written character of their own, and till very recently the art of writing (Persian) was confined to, perhaps, the Rajas of these countries or rather to their Munshis, whenever they had any. Some of them may be able to read the Koran. Even this I doubt, as of hundreds of people I saw only one who could read at Gilgit, and he was a Kashmiri who had travelled far and wide and had at last settled in that country.

F. HOLIDAYS.

796 The great holiday of the Shîn people happened in 1867, during the month succeeding the Ramazan, but seems to be generally on the sixth of February. It is called the "Shinó náo," "the new day of the Shîn people." The Gilgitis call the day "Shinó bazóno," "the spring of the Shîn people." [The year, it will be remembered, is divided into bazono = spring; walo = summer; shero = autumn;

2: Lorimer L-3 (1920-24) 1929 AV3 Dard AV3

The matter I have to present came to me largely fortuitously. My own interests lay in matters linguistic, and my immediate object was to obtain knowledge and specimens of the local languages. These languages are, of course, unwritten.

My principal method in such cases has been to get the people to tell me current popular tales and legends, and to give me accounts of local customs and beliefs, and to write them down to their dictation.

The content of my language material may therefore present subject of interest to folklorists, but it has not been collected with the critical knowledge or care of an expert folklorist.

Material thus casually collected is bound to present contradictions, ambiguities, and possibly misunderstandings, when it is not set in the firm frame of a story.

In regard to the terrain with which we are concerned, it is enough to recall that it is situated in the extreme north of India, to the north-west of Kashmir, in one of the loftiest mountain tracts of the world: the meeting point of the Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges, where peaks and even ranges of 20,000 feet are a commonplace. The physical features are such as to favour isolation, a condition difficult of attainment in a continental country. Access for foreign influences must always have been difficult and restricted.

Even in recent times with the advent of the Pax Britannica, the partial establishment of foreign administration, and the construction of traversable roads, there has been no overwhelming inflow of exogenous influences, only a gradual infiltration. Thus old-standing beliefs and customs have not been subjected to any violent assault by modern disintegrating forces.

Isolation, however, is never more than relative.

In the case of Gilgit, at some unknown time, probably not more than 500 or 600 years ago, Islam gained admittance and sooner or later became the sole recognized religion in the region. Islam is a whole cultural system in itself,

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(8) The pan belongs to Khana, the Raja of Yasin, etc.

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(9) The pan belongs to righteous Girkis (the ruler of Hunza).

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(10) The pan belongs to Maryo the son of Machat (a celebrated person of the Rono family).

(11) The pan is placed on Neelo But etc. At the same time the women who are in an inner room recite the following song :—

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Translation.

(1) A large coral grain belongs to Bair Gul.

I will never let another string this on a thread.

I will string it myself.

(2) A large coral grain belongs to Malik, the Chief of Gilgit.

I will never let another string this.

I will string it myself.

After the marriage cermony the following song is sung at the house of the bride :—

Translation.

(1) Come out, O beloved of your mother, why are you delaying?

(2) Come out, O water sprite, why are you delaying?

(3) Come, O possessers of golden locks, why are you delaying?

(4) Come out, O mistress of charming eyes, why are you delaying?

(5) Come out, O owner of pearly teeth, why are you delaying?

On this she is brought out. She weeps bitterly at the separation from her relatives, and the assembly sings the following song :—

Translation.

(1) Do not weep, O flower-like girl, thy complexion will turn pale.

(2) Thou wilt go on a lofty hill, O girl, thy complexion will turn pale.

(3) Thou wilt (by weeping) burn your heat, thy complexion will turn pale.

Typical birth song ... Nil

Typical death song ... Nil

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11. No written language possessed by the people.